

Washington, DC -- Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) has announced the winners of the 2008 High School Congressional Arts Competition. The first-place winner of the annual competition was Nicollette Mawad of Bayshore High School in Bradenton.

Each spring, a nation-wide high school arts competition is sponsored by the members of the U.S. House of Representatives to recognize and encourage the artistic talent in each Congressional District.

Buchanan and Ringling Museum Executive Director Dr. John Wetenhall announced the winners at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.

"I am very impressed by the exceptional talent of every student who submitted artwork as part of the competition," said Buchanan. "I look forward to seeing the winner's art placed on display in the nation's Capitol."

Ringling Museum curator of collections, Dr. Stephen Borys judged the 14 entries from five schools.

Mawad's entry was a pointillism piece of a sunflower, done in marker on paper. She will receive roundtrip airfare to Washington to attend the Congressional Reception on Wednesday, June 25th, as well as an opportunity to receive a \$5,000 scholarship. The winning artwork will be showcased in the highly traveled corridor between the U.S. Capitol and the Cannon House Office Building.

Other top finishers included:

1st Runner Up – Ryan Fife (Lakewood Ranch High School in Bradenton)

2nd Runner Up – David Sanders (Bayshore High School in Bradenton)

3rd Runner Up – Gemma Hynds (St. Stephen's Episcopal School in Bradenton)

4th Runner Up – Chelsea Broxterman (Southeast High School in Bradenton)

The top finishers in the competition and those students receiving honorable mention all received certificates of special congressional recognition from Congressman Buchanan. Their art work will remain on display in the Children's Room Visitor's Pavilion at the Ringling Museum of Art until next spring.